



*Testimony of Open Communities Alliance  
before the Housing Committee  
February 17, 2015*

**RE: In support of Proposed House Bills 6461 (data collection) 6462 (mobility counseling), and 6640 (LIHTC balance)**

Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Butler and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Erin Boggs and I am a fair housing attorney and the Executive Director of Open Communities Alliance (OCA). I come before you today to speak in favor of three bills that will reverse racial and economic segregation, create access to opportunity, and affirmatively further fair housing. These are proposed House Bills 6461, 6462, and 6640.

### **The Problem**

Article First, Section 20 of the Connecticut Constitution states,  
***No person shall be denied the equal protection of the law nor be subjected to segregation or discrimination in the exercise or enjoyment of his civil or political rights because of religion, race, color, ancestry or national origin.***

And yet, here in Connecticut we experience some of the highest rates of segregation by race and ethnicity in the country.<sup>1</sup> This segregation is closely linked with patterns of concentrated poverty. State and federally funded programs contribute to creating and reinforcing these lines of segregation.

Such high levels of segregation isolate people of color from the opportunities that lead to success in life, like thriving schools, safe neighborhoods, health resources, and social networks that connect to employment. In fact, *81% of Blacks and 79% of Latinos are living in areas of "low opportunity" compared to 25% of Whites and 44% of Asians.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport areas all rank in the top 10% of 362 areas around the country for Latino/White segregation as measured by the dissimilarity index. These same areas rank in the top 20% for Black/White segregation. Diversity Data and the Harvard School of Public Health, 2010, <http://diversitydata.sph.harvard.edu/>.

<sup>2</sup> Reece et al., *People, Place and Opportunity: Mapping Communities of Opportunity in Connecticut*, Kirwan Institute, 2009/2010, <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/connecticut-op-mapping-temporary/>.

Opportunity isolation, in turn, has a deep impact that is patently felt in Connecticut in a variety of ways.

- Connecticut is home to some of the most severe disparities in school performance between White children and Latino and Black children in the nation.<sup>3</sup>
- Connecticut has some of the widest gaps in unemployment rates by race and ethnicity in the country. While the unemployment rate for Whites is around 8.4%, it is about 17.3% for Latinos and 17% for Blacks. Connecticut has the second widest gap in the U.S. in unemployment rates between Latinos and Whites and the 10<sup>th</sup> widest gap between Blacks and Whites.<sup>4</sup>
- Connecticut has some of the highest incarceration rates by race and ethnicity in the country. With 12 Blacks incarcerated for every White inmate, Connecticut has the fourth highest Black/White ratio in the country.<sup>5</sup> Connecticut has *the highest* Latino/White incarceration rate in the country – 6.6 Latinos are incarcerated for every White inmate.<sup>6</sup>
- Starkly different health outcomes for Black and Latinos and Whites are longstanding and cut across health indicators. For example, in Connecticut, infant mortality rates for Blacks and Latinos are three and two times greater, respectively, as compared to Whites. In 2009, Connecticut asthma hospitalization rates for Blacks and Latinos were almost five times that for White non-Latinos.<sup>7</sup> A wealth of research has documented the connections between health outcomes, race, and geography.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Not including Washington, DC, Connecticut has the largest gap between White and Black fourth graders based on reading test scores and ranks near the bottom for math (42 out of 46 states, including DC) and science (33 out of 40 states, including DC). Connecticut also has the largest White Non-Hispanic/Hispanic achievement gap for fourth graders on reading, math and science standardized tests. National Assessment of Educational Progress Database, National Center on Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/statecomparisons/>.

<sup>4</sup> Algernon Austin, *No relief in 2012 from high unemployment for African Americans and Latinos*, Economic Policy Institute, February 16, 2012, <http://www.epi.org/publication/ib322-african-american-latino-unemployment/>.

<sup>5</sup> Marc Mauer and Ryan S. King, *Uneven Justice: State Rates of Incarceration By Race and Ethnicity*, The Sentencing Project, July 2007, pg. 10, [http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/rd\\_stateratesofincbyraceandethnicity.pdf](http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/rd_stateratesofincbyraceandethnicity.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>7</sup> Nepal, A.N., Peng, J., Kloter, A., Hewes, S., & Boulay, E. (2012). *The Burden of Asthma in Connecticut*. Hartford, CT: Connecticut Department of Public Health, p. 114, [http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hems/asthma/pdf/full\\_report\\_with\\_cover.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hems/asthma/pdf/full_report_with_cover.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Dolores Acevedo-Garcia and Theresa Osypuk, "Impacts of Housing and Neighborhoods on Health: Pathways, Racial/Ethnic Disparities, and Policy Directions," Chapter 6 from *Segregation: The Rising Cost for America*, eds. James H. Carr and Nandinee K. Kutty, pg. 197 (Rutledge, 2008).

- Race and income are almost inextricably intertwined and the income gap between the rich and poor is growing in Connecticut. Since the 1970s, Connecticut has experienced the greatest increase in the income disparity between the top 20% and bottom 20% of income earners in the nation.<sup>9</sup>

## Solutions

The bills before the Housing Committee today offer three solutions:

1. Rebalancing the locations of units generated by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, a key engine for the creation of affordable housing.
2. Improving the state's mobility counseling program and establishing pilot mobility RAPs to give families access to thriving neighborhoods.
3. Improved data collection to allow the state to determine how we are doing on promoting housing choice and give a way to plan going forward.

I will address each of these in turn.

## Opportunity Mapping

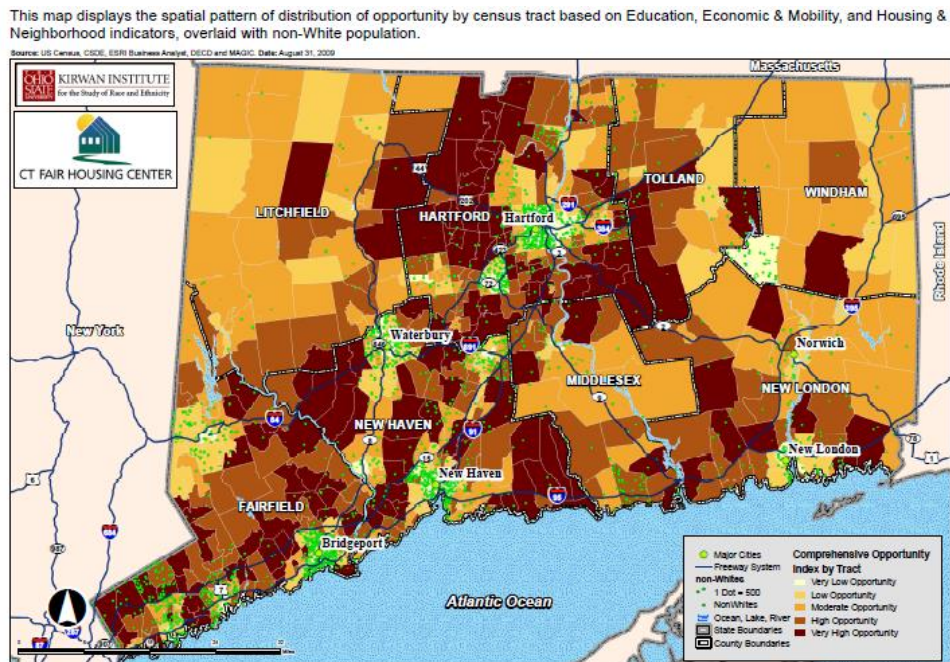
Many of the solutions proposed here rely on an understanding of a neighborhood assessment tool called opportunity mapping. More details are provided in a report conducted by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, *People, Place and Opportunity: Mapping Communities of Opportunity in Connecticut*,<sup>10</sup> but the basic idea is that neighborhood indicators commonly associated can be mapped and such maps can assist guide neighborhood investment, affordable housing location, and other planning in a way that increases access to opportunity for groups who have historically been opportunity-isolated and do this in away that does not reconstitute poverty concentration.

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<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth McNichol et al., "Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends," *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 11, <http://www.cbpp.org/files/11-15-12sfp.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> The Kirwan Report is available here, <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/connecticut-opportunity-communities-initiative/>.

**Figure 1: 2009 opportunity mapping for Connecticut with minority population**



### Living in Lower Opportunity Areas

Blacks:	81%
Latinos:	79%
Whites:	25%
Asians:	44%

**Figure 2: Data used to generate 2009 Opportunity Mapping**

Educational Opportunity	Economic Opportunity	Neighborhood/Housing Quality
Students Passing Math Test scores	Unemployment Rates	Neighborhood Vacancy Rate
Students Passing Reading Test scores	Population on Public Assistance	Crime Index or Crime Rate
Educational attainment	Economic Climate(Job Trends)	Neighborhood Poverty Rate
	Mean Commute Time	Home Ownership Rate

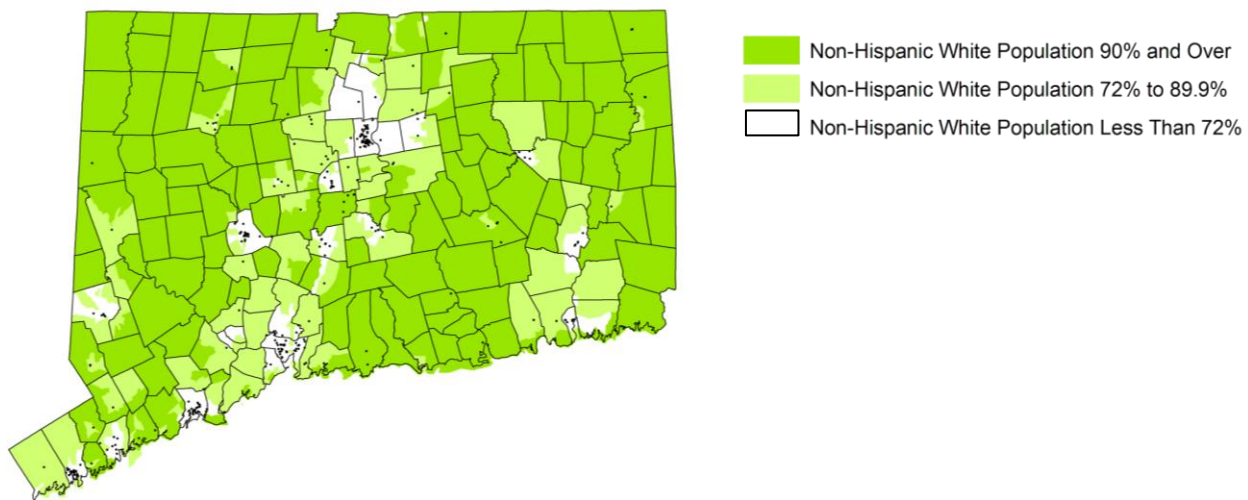
### **Proposed H.B. No. 6640 AN ACT CONCERNING ALLOCATIONS OF LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS. (HSG)**

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program supports the development, purchase, and rehabilitation of rental housing developments that include units affordable to low-income individuals and families. It is a program of the federal Department of Treasury administered in Connecticut by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA). The

program produces more units of affordable housing than any other federal program in the country. Connecticut currently has approximately 20,000 LIHTC units.

**Where are LIHTC units located?** Unfortunately, according to preliminary data from the forthcoming Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, 73% of LIHTC developments are located in high poverty and minority concentrated areas, which make up less than 11% of the land area of the state.

**Figure 3: Low Income Housing Tax Credit Locations in Connecticut as of 2012**



**Figure 4: LIHTC by Race, Poverty and RCAP (by tract)**

Demographic Served	Total Units	Disproportionately Minority Areas (30% or >)	High Poverty Areas (9.2% or >)	Racially & Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (50+% minority + 3x regional poverty)
<i>% of CT Land Area</i>		5.8%	10.5%	<1%
<b>All</b>	20,018	73%	73%	40%
<b>Open to All</b>	13,560	76%	76%	37%
<b>Elderly</b>	4,740	58%	55%	36%
<b>Supportive</b>	734	96%	96%	63%

**Why is this a problem?** Operating a federally funded program in such a segregating manner is problematic for several reasons.

- It does not allow the state as whole to leverage resources like thriving schools to give our diverse workforce of the future access to areas of Connecticut that are thriving.
- It denies housing choice to low-income families and individuals interested in living in communities with greater access to opportunity.
- In many cases (with some exceptions), it increases poverty concentration, which stymies the efforts of community members trying to revitalize and bring economic diversity to struggling communities.
- Because Blacks and Latinos in Connecticut earn, on average, half or less of what Whites earn, subsidized housing developed in a segregating manner will reinforce lines of segregation.
- It runs afoul of fair housing laws such as the Fair Housing Act.

**What is the solution?** Low Income Housing Tax Credits are handed out according to the priorities set in the *Qualified Allocation Plan* developed by CHFA. Because this allocation is determined at the state level, Connecticut has considerable control over how the program is used. For over 10 years advocates have urged CHFA to change the LIHTC program to bring balance to the allocation of credits. While some modest changes have been made, much more needs to be done to remedy the way the program has been administered since its inception in 1986.

The LIHTC program needs to be reoriented to prioritize higher opportunity developments that create housing choice *and* lower opportunity developments that contribute to neighborhood revitalization or provide other benefits.

Open Communities Alliance proposes an *Opportunity Leveraging Approach*, which prioritizes LIHTC allocations to take advantage of other community and investment resources. Using such an approach, a significant percentage of credits should be prioritized for non-age-restricted developments in higher opportunity areas. Another smaller percentage of credits should be prioritized for age-restricted projects in higher opportunity areas. An additional

percentage should be prioritized for catalytic projects in areas of “moderate” and “lower opportunity.”

To address exclusionary zoning, if an otherwise qualifying higher opportunity development is not prepared to move forward due to zoning issues and an CGS Sec. 8-30g appeal is pending, the development would receive priority consideration for credits for each year until the case is resolved.

To ensure that all credits are used each year, if an insufficient number of applications obtaining threshold points for either priority area is submitted, the remaining credits would become available largely without regard to opportunity area location.

#### **Proposed H.B. No. 6461 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING. (HSG)**

The Department of Housing and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority must respond to an array of reporting requirements at the state and federal level. These requirements include federal obligations to report data on fair housing barriers through the Analysis of Impediments and the Consolidated Plan. State laws such as CGS Secs. 8-37s, 8-37t, 8-37bb, 8-37ee, 8-37qqq, and 8-37rrr all create reporting obligations for DOH and CHFA. This statutory scheme needs to be streamlined and improved. The major changes that need to be made are:

- *Cover all agencies involved in housing.* Reporting should extend to all government entities providing or supporting affordable housing.
- *Create a comprehensive list of subsidized housing.* The creation of a comprehensive list of all subsidized housing in the state, regardless of administering agency. Such a list should be analyzed by neighborhood characteristics, unit bedroom sizes, government financial investment, cost per unit, funding program, income targeting, and more.
- *Conduct an annual fair housing assessment.* Data collection must be designed allow assessment of whether we are making progress on the obligation to affirmatively further fair housing. This means we need to know where existing housing is and where new housing is created based on concentrations of poverty and by race and ethnicity within census tracts. We also need to know where subsidized housing residents are living by race, ethnicity, and other characteristics.



- *Make affirmative marketing real.* Likewise, because there is a requirement that state funded projects affirmatively market to people who are least likely to apply and for DOH to assess progress in generating diverse housing (CGS Sec. 8-37ee), we need to know the race and ethnicity of people in subsidized housing if they choose to share it. DOH has not had the resources to fully collect and analyze this data and there is no real enforcement of this provision.
- *Fully assess affordable housing need.* In terms of assessing need, we need to have reliable demographic projections of the need for family (and projected sizes of families), elderly, and supportive housing and housing for people with disabilities.
- *Create an enforcement option.* In its wisdom, the Legislature established CGS Sec. 8-37ee, which requires DOH and CHFA to affirmatively further fair housing – which means taking proactive steps to counter the long history of government-sponsored policies that helped to generate the housing segregation we experience today. There is no provision within the statute to enforce this statutory obligation.
- *Automate:* Many of these problems can be resolved with an improved automated system for accepting and processing funding applications submitted for housing funding and housing assistance. Such a system should be instituted.

Open Communities Alliance recommends that these measures be put in place and that DOH and other state agencies involved in housing be given the funding necessary to implement them.

#### **Proposed H.B. No. 6462 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RENTAL ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM.** (HSG)

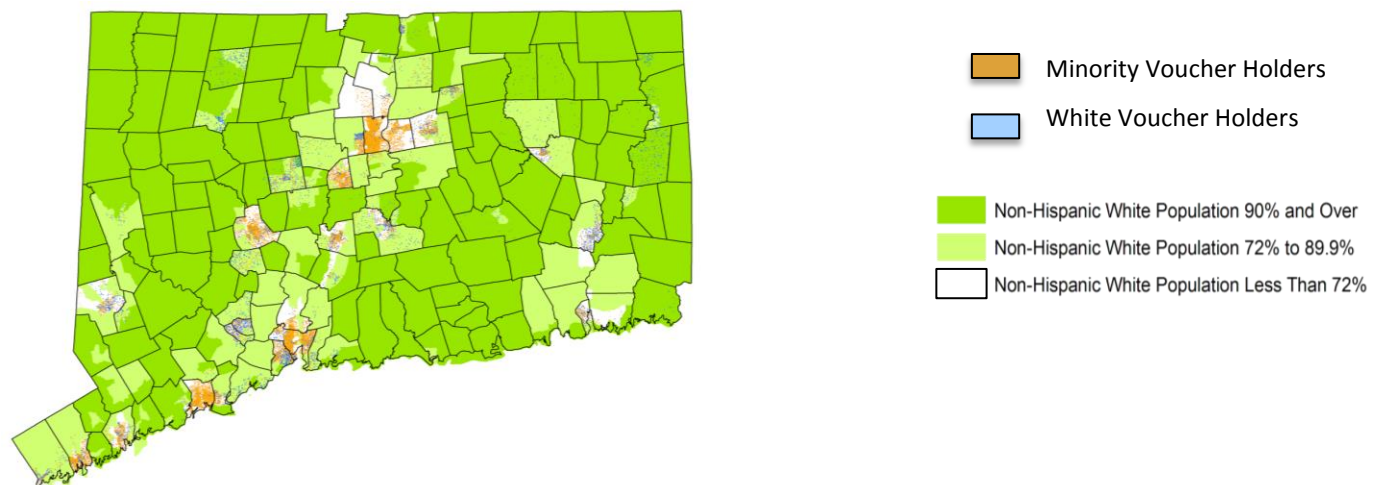
**What is mobility counseling?** Mobility counseling is assistance for people using *tenant-based government housing subsidies* who are interested in moving to areas that offer greater opportunities in terms of school performance, personal safety, employment, and other benefits. Counseling can include assistance with credit repair, help identifying potential units, and information about neighborhood amenities. Mobility counseling creates choice in programs that, when left to their own devices, do not promote housing choice.



**Why do we need mobility counseling?** Years of research,<sup>11</sup> and data from CT (below), demonstrate that without adequate mobility counseling, the only option for many people using government housing subsidies is high poverty areas isolated from opportunity.

<b>Figure 5: Connecticut Voucher Holders (VCH) By Location and Minority Status (by tracts)</b>			
Voucher Holder Race/Ethnicity	Disproportionately Minority Areas (30% or >)	High Poverty Areas (9.2% or >)	Racially & Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (50+% minority + 3x regional poverty)
All	83%	79%	33%
Minority	92%	85.5%	40%
Non-Hispanic White	62%	65%	40%
Size of Land Area in CT	5.8%	10.5%	<1%

**Figure 6: Housing Choice Vouchers by White and Minority Population (2009)<sup>12</sup>**



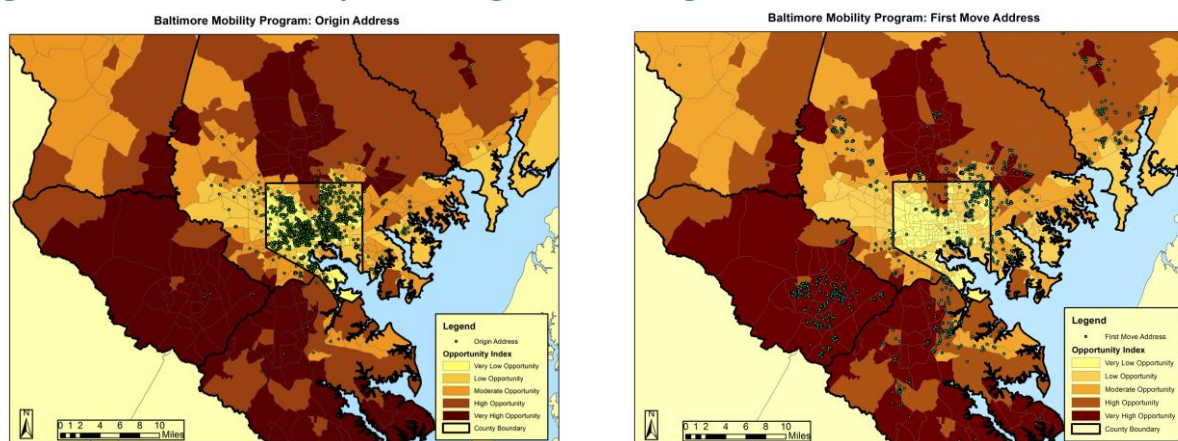
<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Darrah and Stefanie DeLuca, “‘Living Here Has Changed My Whole Perspective’: How Escaping Inner-City Poverty Shapes Neighborhood and Housing Choice,” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2014): 350–84. See also Judith D. Feins and Rhiannon Patterson, “Geographic mobility in the housing choice voucher program: A study of families entering the program, 1995–2002,” *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research* 8, no. 2 (2005): 21–47; Devine, D. J., Gray, R. W., Rubin, L., & Taghavi, L. B., “Housing choice voucher location patterns: Implications for participant and neighborhood welfare.” U.S. Dep’t of Housing and Urban Development. (2003), [http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/location\\_paper.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/location_paper.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Data for 31,315 Housing Choice Vouchers for 2009 were provided by HUD for the forthcoming Connecticut Analysis of Impediments. The data set includes 30,280 vouchers with race/ethnicity information (where more than 11 vouchers in Census tract) mapped to their corresponding Census 2000 tract. The number of minority voucher holders is 23,559, and non-Hispanic White voucher holders number 6,721.

**Why are voucher holders so segregated?** Segregation in the Housing Choice Voucher and similar tenant-based housing subsidy programs happens for a variety of reasons, including program incentives that discourage mobility, program practices that limit choice (like lists of available units only in certain areas), housing discrimination, the need for more affordable housing, and, relatedly, rents in thriving areas that are beyond program limits.<sup>13</sup> Research also demonstrates that we all have “racial blind spots,” that is, we tend to consider living in areas we are familiar with and these tend to be populated by people of our own race.<sup>14</sup>

**What is the solution?** Despite these challenges, with the assistance of mobility counseling, voucher holders in other areas around the country, including Baltimore, Dallas, and Chicago, have successfully made mobility moves that have reshaped their lives.<sup>15</sup> Mobility counseling in Baltimore, MD, for example, has assisted over 2,500 Housing Choice Voucher Holders opting into the program move from struggling areas to thriving neighborhoods.

**Figure 7: Baltimore Mobility Counseling results through 2012**



#### Baltimore Before Mobility Counseling

#### Baltimore After Mobility Counseling

Baltimore – Pre- and Post-Counseling voucher locations over an 8-year period. These special vouchers were available only to families making mobility moves. Map provided courtesy of Professor Stefanie DeLuca, Johns Hopkins University. Darker shading indicates greater neighborhood opportunity, like access to thriving schools.

<sup>13</sup> DeLuca, S., Garboden, P., & Rosenblatt, P. (2013), Segregating shelter: How housing policies shape the residential locations of low income minority families, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 647, 271.

<sup>14</sup> Maria Krysan, “Racial Blind Spots: A Barrier to Integrated Communities in Chicago,” Institute of Government & Public Affairs, July 2008, <http://igpa.uillinois.edu/sites/igpa.uillinois.edu/files/CriticalIssues07-2008Krysan.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Lora Engdahl, “New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New Schools: A Progress Report on the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program,” PRRAC, <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/BaltimoreMobilityReport.pdf>; Inclusive Communities Project, Inc., “Mobility Works,” <http://www.inclusivecommunities.net/MobilityWorks.pdf>; Patrick Sharkey, *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress toward Racial Equality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 141–46; Julia Burdick-Will, Jens Ludwig, et al, “Converging Evidence for Neighborhood Effects on Children’s Test Scores,” [http://www.patricksharkey.net/images/pdf/Burdick-Will\\_Opportunity\\_2010.pdf](http://www.patricksharkey.net/images/pdf/Burdick-Will_Opportunity_2010.pdf).

**Do voucher holders want choice?** Mobility counseling is all the more critical because many voucher families desperately want the chance to move out of areas that are dangerous, unhealthy, and not providing their children with adequate educational opportunities. While some families very much want to stay to revitalize their struggling communities, discussion groups with voucher holders reveal a consensus that voucher families should have a choice.<sup>16</sup>

“When we first moved, the children didn’t like it because it was so quiet...and then one of the children woke up and said, ‘We slept good. We don’t hear the ambulance, we don’t hear the police cars.’”  
*Marie, mobility program participant, Maryland*

**What are the results of mobility moves?** Researchers have undertaken several efforts to delve into outcomes for families using Housing Choice Vouchers who move from areas that are struggling to neighborhoods that are thriving, with different definitions used to identify each kind of neighborhood, some relying just on poverty rates, others including other factors like race and neighborhood indicators like school performance. In a HUD experiment called Moving to Opportunity found that families who moved experienced positive health outcomes. Specifically, girls reported lower levels of stress, less risk-taking behavior and improved school performance.<sup>17</sup> Parents reported feeling safer, which may be connected to findings of improved mental health.<sup>18</sup> Researchers also found lower rates of obesity among families who made mobility moves.<sup>19</sup> Some less-than-stellar outcomes from the Moving to Opportunity program are attributed to insufficiently robust definitions of a successful move within the program’s criteria and lack of nuance in program measurement.<sup>20</sup>

Other mobility programs that use more robust definitions of a successful move and have strong track records for families remaining in their new neighborhood generate even stronger results. There are two mobility counseling efforts that have been the

“It’s only in leaving that I started growing and wanting to do different things, learn different things and be something different.”  
*Kimberly, mobility program participant, Maryland*

<sup>16</sup> Connecticut Fair Housing Center, “Housing Mobility: What Do Housing Voucher Recipients Want?,” 5, <http://www.ctfairhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/CFHC-HousMobilDiscGrp.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Sharkey, *supra* note 9, at 145.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> Sharkey, *supra* note 9, at 146

frequent subjects of research, the Gautreaux program in Chicago resulting from a lawsuit against HUD and the Chicago Housing Authority, and a program in Baltimore resulting from litigation against HUD.

**Case Study – Gautreaux:** Studies analyzing Gautreaux have found that parents had higher rates of employment and were less likely to be on welfare.<sup>21</sup> While children had some adjustment difficulties, they have better graduation, college attendance, and workforce participation rates.<sup>22</sup> They also generated lower drop out rates,<sup>23</sup> and less criminal involvement for males.<sup>24</sup> While in initial studies of the program the sample was small, not all families were able to be tracked down, and family preferences were at play,<sup>25</sup> subsequent analyses that adjust for these concerns still found consistent positive results.<sup>26</sup>

**Case Study - Baltimore Mobility Program:** Families making moves as part of the Baltimore Mobility Program experienced an improvement in neighborhood poverty levels, with pre-move neighborhoods having poverty rates of 32.3% and post-move neighborhoods having 9.8% poverty.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, 84% of current program participants remained in neighborhoods with less than 20% poverty 2-10 years later.<sup>28</sup> An improved quality of life is reported by 85% of recent movers, and for children, improved health and better schools are also reported.<sup>29</sup> The impact of these moves on life outcomes for program participants is being studied currently.

**Don't families move back to their old neighborhood?** Whether families stay in their new neighborhood after receiving mobility counseling depends on a number of factors, but if they make it through a transition period of a year or two, they tend to stay.<sup>30</sup> In Baltimore, families must agree to remain in their new neighborhood for a year as a condition receiving their

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<sup>21</sup> Sharkey, *supra* note 9, at 142.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at 98 (any college attendance, 50% v. 21%; 4-year college attended, 27% v. 4%, *Id.* at 142).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* at 142.

<sup>24</sup> Stefanie DeLuca, et al., Gautreaux mothers and their children: an update, (2010), Housing Policy Debate, 20, 22, <http://krieger.jhu.edu/sociology/wp-content/uploads/sites/28/2012/02/HPD-2010.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Sharkey, *supra* note 9, at 143.

<sup>26</sup> Julia Burdick-Will, Jens Ludwig, et al, "Converging Evidence for Neighborhood Effects on Children's Test Scores," 13–14, [http://www.patricksharkey.net/images/pdf/Burdick-Will\\_Opportunity\\_2010.pdf](http://www.patricksharkey.net/images/pdf/Burdick-Will_Opportunity_2010.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Webinar Presentation with Barbara Samuels, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> Lora Engdahl, "New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New Schools: A Progress Report on the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program," PRRAC, 27-28, <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/BaltimoreMobilityReport.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> Webinar Presentation with Barbara Samuels, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014.

mobility voucher.<sup>31</sup> In many voucher programs families are obligated to stay where their voucher originates for the first year of the program – and that is often in a deeply under-resourced and poverty-concentrated area.

More generally, researchers have found that families who have made mobility moves often move back to their old neighborhoods for reasons that have nothing to do with missing aspects of their neighborhood of origin. In fact, Professor Stefanie DeLuca of Johns Hopkins has found that such moves are generally the result of “brick-and-mortar” issues like a landlord’s decision to sell the property or the family growing in size and not finding a larger unit in their new neighborhood.<sup>32</sup>

**Do we have mobility counseling in CT?** Since 2002, the Department of Housing (DOH) has funded a mobility counseling program run by three subcontractors in different parts of the state, HOME, Inc. in the New Haven area, the Housing Education Resource Center in the Hartford area, and New Opportunities in the Waterbury and Bridgeport areas. The mobility program is funded through Housing Choice Voucher administrative funds. It supports a payment of \$1,962 per successful mobility move.

The DOH mobility contract is outdated in the sense that it relies solely on poverty measures to define successful moves. Under the current state contract, a Type A move simple means that the voucher holder moved to an area with less than 15% poverty; similarly, a Type B move means that they moved to an area with greater than 15% but less than 30% poverty. Type C moves mean an improvement in the poverty rate of 10% or more.<sup>33</sup> This state contract does not conform to any of the standard national definitions of true “mobility programs” and allows contractors to place families in already poor neighborhoods – and the availability of employment or thriving schools within the new are not even included as criteria.

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<sup>31</sup> Lora Engdahl, “New Homes, New Neighborhoods, New Schools: A Progress Report on the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program,” PRRAC, 20, <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/BaltimoreMobilityReport.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Stefanie DeLuca, “Learning from Voucher Families: Close Ups of the Search and Relocation Process in Mobile and Baltimore,” PRRAC, 4, [http://www.prrac.org/pdf/deluca\\_hud\\_fheo\\_july\\_2012.pdf](http://www.prrac.org/pdf/deluca_hud_fheo_july_2012.pdf); Engdahl, *supra* note 38, at 6.

<sup>33</sup> DOH Mobility Counselor Contract.

Figure 8: Mobility Counseling Moves <sup>34</sup>	
Type of Move	% of Moves
Type A (under 15% poverty)	38%
Type B (15%-30% poverty)	39%
Type C (10% poverty reduction)	26%
Type HI (>30% poverty)	23%

This assessment used 2010 census data.<sup>35</sup> The total adds up over 100% because Type C and HI moves overlap with each other and other move types.

The Connecticut program is performing well within these contract limitations in the sense that 77% of mobility clients who moved settled in neighborhoods that had a poverty rate of 30% or less. However, 50% of participants who moved transitioned to areas with poverty rates on par with their original home or higher.

The program is not providing desegregating options for participants. Only 9.7% of program participants moved to communities that are disproportionately White (72% or more) and 89% of moves were to areas that were disproportionately minority populated. In addition, many program participants from under-resourced areas remain there.

Figure 8: Mobility Participants Remaining in Town of Origin After Counseling – Selected Cities	
City	% Clients Staying
Bridgeport	88%
Hartford	68%
New Haven	82%

While the contractors are meeting their contract obligations with the state of Connecticut, the state is not meeting its fair housing obligations with such a weak set of performance targets. The program outcomes could be meaningfully improved if the performance measures were improved and the program funded at a higher level.

**What do we need to do to make mobility counseling successful?** Drawing on the lessons from the last 40 years of mobility counseling efforts, our program here in Connecticut would benefit from several substantive changes, deeper investment, and expansion. Included in Appendix A

<sup>34</sup> The assessment of the performance of the Connecticut Mobility Program is drawn from data supporting the forthcoming Connecticut Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice

<sup>35</sup> Reporting for the three mobility programs is based on 2000 census data, so there may be some variation in results between those reported here, which are based on 2010 data.

is a full list of recommendations for improving the program. While the recommendations in Appendix A require a full commitment to the program and mobility philosophy, there are three steps we can take immediately to initiate better mobility counseling in Connecticut:

- (1) Enhance the current program:** Improving the current program by using “opportunity mapping” to define successful moves, dedicating security deposit guarantees to mobility moves and improving funding for counseling services at levels that reflect the national standards.
- (2) Create a Mobility RAP pilot program:** Establish a pilot program of Mobility RAPS, Rental Assistance Program certificates available to mobility counseling clients making successful mobility moves. Open Communities Alliance recommends that such a program involve at least 300 vouchers, Security Deposit Guarantees and allocate significantly more funding per client than is currently available through the state’s current program.
- (3) Assess Housing Authority Challenges:** Require data collection from housing authorities that will permit an assessment to determine which housing authorities are facing challenges providing their Housing Choice Voucher clients with choices in housing. This will allow for the targeting of mobility counseling assistance in the future.

## Conclusion

In sum, Connecticut must contend with deep levels of segregation and the role government programs play in restricting housing choice. The three bills proposed today, Proposed House Bills 6461 (data collection) 6462 (mobility counseling), and 6640 (LIHTC balance), are the beginning of an effort to do just that.



## **Appendix A**

### ***Open Communities Alliance's Recommendations for Improving Connecticut's Mobility Counseling Program.***

#### ***Substantive Changes***

- *Strong definitions of successful moves.* The mobility programs that show the most promise to produce the strong results define a successful mobility move by using criteria beyond just poverty. These more nuanced definitions ensure that other important opportunity factors, like school performance, are considered when setting program performance goals. We are fortunate in Connecticut to have a census tract-level assessment of opportunity called "Opportunity Mapping" originally developed by the Connecticut Fair Housing Center with assistance from the Kirwan Institute. Such geographical assessments have been successfully used to define mobility moves in Dallas and, eventually, will be implemented in Baltimore. The Open Communities Alliance has helped to further refine these maps, adding additional factors and updating with new data.
- *Automatic increased search times at counselor discretion.* In Connecticut, less rental housing is available in thriving communities and voucher holders are more likely to experience discrimination than other home-seekers. For these reasons, it is important that families not be put at risk of losing their vouchers if they need additional time to find housing as long as they are actively engaged in their housing search.
- *Dedicated mobility vouchers/RAPs.* In Baltimore and Dallas a pool of housing choice vouchers are dedicated solely to mobility program participants. These subsidies could be taken from the current available subsidies and the pool could be increased as vouchers turn over. Advocates focusing on specialized client populations who use vouchers should know that within each such group there are families and individuals who would benefit greatly from a mobility move.
- *Enhance Access for Existing Voucher Holders.* Some of the best candidates for mobility moves are families who have been stably housed with a voucher for a period of time rather than those who are new to the voucher or RAP program. Because the annual recertification for these programs does not occur in person, there is very little opportunity for mobility counselors to recruit recertifying program participants. Communications by mail have not been successful. The state should consider developing enhanced means of communicating with this population about mobility counseling. Such communications might happen as a part of other program outreach or via text messages.

#### ***Deeper Investment***

- *Security Deposit Assistance.* In Connecticut, prior to moving in landlords can require two months' of security deposit in addition to the first month's rent. When moving to higher

opportunity areas, which tend to have higher rents, such large upfront costs can be impossible for voucher families. Providing cash security deposit assistance limited to high opportunity areas, as has been done in Dallas and Baltimore, is an investment that will pay dividends by breaking the cycle of poverty.

- *Move financial assistance.* The mobility program in Dallas provides modest assistance with moving expenses, in the range of \$300. Such help can be the determining factor in whether a family stays in a struggling neighborhood or make a mobility move.
- *Application fee assistance.* Application fees can be prohibitive for voucher families. A modest program allowance for application fees can make mobility moves possible. Successful programs elsewhere in the country offer \$100.
- *Appropriate counselor/client ratios.* Understaffing a mobility counseling program can harm outcomes.
- *Post-move assistance.* It is important that a portion of counseling resources be available to help families and landlords after moves have happened. In Baltimore the mobility program has found post-move counseling critical to ensuring that families remain in their new neighborhoods.
- *Enhanced Rents.* In Dallas and Baltimore, a special rent calculation is used to ensure that mobility vouchers will cover the rent in areas that are more expensive. This is an important program component that should be considered here in Connecticut.

## ***Expansion***

Currently in Connecticut, 7,451 people receive a Housing Choice Voucher through the Department of Housing, which acts as a housing authority for this purpose. Of these, 3,971 have children. DOH also administers another 4,032 Rental Assistance Program certificates. The people who get these benefits through the Department of Housing currently have access to mobility counseling services in Connecticut. Another 23,000 families and individuals receive their vouchers through other housing authorities and do not have access to mobility counseling.

- *Expand Mobility Counseling to all Housing Choice Voucher Program and RAP recipients.* It is in the interest of the state that all government housing subsidy recipients who would like greater housing choice have access to mobility counseling because it will lead to improved outcomes across a range of measures as discussed above. For this reason, in a time of decreasing federal assistance to housing authorities, expanding mobility counseling services is a wise investment.
- *Phasing in expansion.* If expansion of the program is to be phased in, the state could consider focusing first on families with children under six living in high crime areas with overburdened schools. Research shows that exposure to stress and violence during this period

can have significant negative repercussions for child health and learning.<sup>36</sup> Data on voucher families with children under six is not readily available, so it is hard to determine how many families would be involved. However, on average about half of the households with HCV have children. If in addition to DOH voucher holders, only families with children currently living in under-resourced areas are prioritized, the program would need to serve approximately an additional 11,500 families.

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<sup>36</sup> Sharkey, *supra* note 9, at 183–84.